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INTRODUCTION

Kinship as an important organizing principle ın human society play crucial role ın the regulation of behaviour and thus enjoy a privileged position ın Social anthropology Most anthropologists consider kinship as an "area of anthropological discourse where the ground rules are clearly laıd down" (Good and Barnad 1984 2) and ıs central to the theoretical development of the discipline This subfield attempts to apprehend comprehensively the nature and rule of descent, marriage alliance, relations of affinity, kmship terminology and behaviour, and the lıke which occupied a pnde of place ın the general discussion of kmship theory dunng the fifties, sixties and seventies of thıs century

There are two major structural approaches adopted ın the study of kınship, they are descent and alliance Descent theory which dominated the British Social anthropology from the 1940s to 1960s was developed out of earlier anthropological theories which had as their central concern the relationship between kmship and temtory and between family and kın group Thıs school of thought interpreted the kmship behaviour ın terms of the function of corporate groups, sibling solıdarıty and agnatıc unity, and drew attention to important issues such as the organization of local groups, kmship relations, regulations of marriage, residence, inheritance and succession

The definition of descent as employed by structural analyst goes back to the work of Rivers for whom the term descent referred to "membership of a group" (1924 85) For Radchffe-Brown (1924), "patrılıneal descent" and "territory" were the two basic elements binding members together ın the organisation of corporate unılıneal descent group Based on Radcliffe-Brown's ıdea, later anthropologists too vıewed that membership to corporate groups are based on descent Thıs assumption led the Cambridge anthropologists (Fortes and Goody) to state categorically that the use of the term 'descent group[1] had sense only ın connection to umlineal descent groups

The notion of descent as the main structural principle of kinship established from African ethnographies came under increasing attack during the 1960s on a number of fronts When ethnographic data became extensively available from other parts of the world, especially from societies encouraging cross-cousin marriages with prescriptive or preferential marriage rule, "Africanist descent model" failed to explain aptly the working of these systems The strongest challenge to descent theory was the development of alliance theory by Levi-Strauss **(1949)** and his followers like Leach (1951, 61), Dumont (1953) and Needham (1962), which depicted the structure as an entailment of perpetual alliance between groups and not as a logical entailment of unilineal descent Alliance theory proved to be aptly applicable to societies where positive or prescriptive marriage rules are present

The debate between descent theory and alliance theory was mainly on two levels - ethnographic and theoretical In the former case, it was the debate between ethnographers working predominantly in Africa on the one hand and in south-east Asia on the other On theoretical level it was a discussion between Radcliffe-Brown's (1940) structural-functionalism and Levi-Strauss's (1949) structuralism However, both the theories were based on principles which are confined within one scientific paradigm, the central issue being, as reviewed by Holy, "the problem of how the social reality is structured or how the components of the structure are integrated into a system" (1976 109) The major criticism raised against both these structural principles — the descent approach or model also labeled as the "jural model" (Verdon 1980) and the alliance model has been their inability to treat as problematic the relations between structural forms and actual behaviour Thus descent theory has to face serious challenge from both alliance theorists as well as critics of structuralist theory

Firth (1957, 63) Goodenough (1955, 70), Davenport (1959), and Schneider (1965) opposed the restricted use of descent to unilmeal descent group Schneider (1965) criticised structural model for its failure to distinguish clearly descent as an abstract or conceptual entity from descent group, the concrete counter part Fredrick Barth (1966, 73) departs from structural analysis pointing out the necessity for an analysis through which structural premises and individual behaviour are connected

Ethnographic data from New Guinea came as a further blow by which many anthropologists felt that the Afncanist jural model could not account for a greater part of the non-African ethnography. This opened a new debate on the relationship between descent and local group based on the explicit variation between New Guinea societies and African societies which led to the characterisation of the former as "loosely structured" as Held (1957) and Pouwcr (1960) expressed The structuralists failure to explain this variation was mainly due to their exclusive focus on structure and their major objective to analyse how this structure works rather than dealing with actual behaviour For Langness (1964) the problem in the interpretation of New Guinea data is the problem of the discrepancy between the ideology of descent and actual behaviour which as Holy says is due to "the continuing use of concepts developed within the frame work of structural theory for answering the questions asked outside this framework" (1976 118) Later anthropologists (Langness 1964, Strathern 1969, 73, Scheffler 1966, 73, Barnes 1962, De Lepervanche 1967-68) argued for the formulation of the structure in such a way that it would subsume not only the normative actions but all the variations in the actual behaviour as well Elkin (1938), Meggit (1962), Berndt (1964, 76), and Hiatt (1962, 66) have implicitly introduced a different representation of social organization by defining groups, not in terms of "binding elements" but with reference to specific activities By shifting the focus onto activities, these anthropologists ha\e succeeded in dissociating descent group from local descent group Regarding this \ariation betw een descent group and local group, Goodenough (1962 5) notes that "it is common for local groups to be organized as descent group" rather than descent groups being localised

It came to be accepted among anthropologists (Sahalin 1965, Langness 1964, De Lepervanche 1967-68, Scheffler 1966 etc) that descent is an ideology in whose term the solidarity of the local group is expressed, however, does not depicts actual behaviour, as aptly pointed out by Sahahn when he says, "a descent doctrine does not express group composition but imposes itself upon the composition" (1965 104) This was an emphasis on the need to distinguish clearly between local descent group and descent, the former being defined on the basis of actual behaviour and interaction and the latter on the basis of formal criteria of membership (Scheffler 1966, Keesmg 1971) Thus territory and

agnatic idioms ate seen as mutually reinforcing each other, and not necessarily being prior over the other as an analytical principle. Based on this thesis, Scheffler (1966, 73) distinguished three analytical levels of social phenomena - descent construct (conceptual or ideational representation), descent-phrased rules (rules upon which they are organised), and descent group (behaviour which are governed by descent-phrased rules) Similar approach has been put forward by Needham (1972) adopting a three-level model of social reality namely, prescription (categoncal level), preference (jural level), and practice (behavioural level) for heuristic purposes This theoretical approach rest essentially on the understanding of how the interaction of the three levels of categories, rules, and practices define social relations and groups Here, an explicit recognition of the ideology and behaviour, category and group, and structure and practices forms the basis of analysis, not treating them as exclusive of each other but as interrelated

Before getting on to explicate these ideas, it is important however to examine the theoretical approaches to Dravidian kinship, the subfield to which Muduga kinship system falls

Studies on Dravidian kinship

The most significant single contribution to our understanding of Dravidian kinship is the one given by Louis Dumont (1953, 57, 64, 67, 83) Viewing Dravidian kinship as an expression of marriage, Dumont demonstrates affinity as an "enduring system" through which the continuity of alliance from one generation to the next occurs His thesis that the terminology is based on alliance rather than descent, still dominates discussions of the system Though a dominant contribution, Dumont's theory amounts to major draw backs which stems from his very notion that the analysis of kinship terminology is an end in itself and that terminology has nothing to do with actual behaviour Nur Yalman (1962, 67) views Dravidian terminology in the setting of Sinhalese bilateral kinship, and his attempt to understand South Indian kinship in the same perspective was an early criticism to Dumont's theory of alliance groups Rejecting the rule of descent exogamy as the primary factor, Yalman tnes to discover the principles inherent in the structure of kinship with the help of terminological categories and rules of behaviour emphasising the strong element of bilaterality Later, Burkhart (1978) in his study of Udayars, an upper caste in

Tamil Nadu, supports Dumont's view He notes that the circles of alliance among the Udayars are like those of Sinhalese "micro-caste" (Yalman 1967) which follow the marriage practices of bilateral cross-cousins and elder sister's daughter as in Tamil Brahmins and Adi-Dravida castes. He also rejects the existence of "wrong marriage" as in the case of Kandyam Sinhalese (ibid) Mc Cormacks (1958) analyses the implication of sister's daughter marriage in the wider frame work of Dravidian kinship system stating that the custom is always found in association with cross-cousin marriage

Adopting a three-level model of social reality proposed for heuristic purposes by Needham (1972), Anthony Good (1981) examines the marriage system of Kondaiyan Kottai Maravar of South India in the frame work of prescription, preference and practice, and thereby emphasising the interrelation of categories, rules and behaviour in the understanding of social relations Good finds fault with the use of the terms "kin" and "affines" proposed by Dumont as problematic and replace it with the concepts of "cross" and "Parallel" as they are neutral analytical concepts (1980, 81, 91)

Adapting the approach of "cultural unity of India", Carter (1974) brings out the similarities between North and South India though there is a diversity with regard to the rules of descent and kin classification By comparing the kinship terminology of North and South India Carter points out that the cross-cousm marnge which is embedded and expressed in kinship terminology is only a surface structure and concludes that Dravidian terminology do not imply cross-cousm mamage But Carter's analysis of Dravidian terminology fails to eliminate the presumption of cross-cousm marriage, because his "two-class equivalence rule" (1973 37) as Trautmann says, "is in fact essentially identical to [our] 'opposite-sex cross cousin – spouse equation rule'" (1981 61), which implies bilateral cross-cousin mamage

However, Trautmann (1981) offered a comprehensive account of the Dravidian kinship system by stating that the many local kinship systems called Dravidian are histoncally related to one another as descendants of a common ancestral system, emphasising the rule of bilateral cross-cousin marriage as ancestral to all Dravidian system Khan's (1994) study of 'Marriage and Kinship among the Muslims in South India' tries to analyse the structure and functioning of Muslim kinship and mamage pattern in the Dravidian milieu thereby emphasising the importance of a

synthetic model of both 'descent' and 'alliance' theory in the understanding of Dravidian kinship system

Emphasising the role of descent and sibling solidarity in the Dravidian kinship terminology, Reddy (1984) brings out the logical inconsistency met with Dumont's terminological distinction which classifies 'mother' along with 'father' as parallel km and 'father's sister' along with 'mother's brother' as cross-kin He argues for a new scheme of cross/parallel distinction classifying 'mother' along with 'mother's brother' and 'father's sister' along with 'father' More recently, Rudner (1990, 97) also finds fault with Dumont's terminological distinction which ignores the use of secondary terms in Dravidian system in distinguishing actual affines from cross-kin or potential affines Rudner points out that the group of actual affines is not the same as the group of potential affines and claims that the "Dumont conflates marriage and marriageability"(1990 167) Defending Rudner's (1990 153) critique of Dumont's association of affinity with marriage ability, Parkin (1996 291) makes clear that for Dumont affinity need not necessarily imply the relation between spouses, since affines are seen persons of the same sex Parkin criticises Rudner in wrongly claiming that Dumont has treated actual Tamil terms inaccurately for maintaining the consistency of his model and strongly argues that whatever deviation actual terminologies exhibits from Dumont's model, they need not challenge that model since "they are not sufficient to suggest an alternative model that is radically different in structure" (1996 296)

Challenges to Dumont's structural explanation have come most notably from the cultural and ethno-sociological approach (Barnett 1976 , David 1973 , Fruzzetti and Oster 1976, Fruzzetti, Oster and Barnett 1982, Kapadia 1993, 95, Cecilia Busby 1997) attempting "to relate structural features of the kinship system to cultural ideas which underlie the categorical distinctions made in the terminology" (Busby 1997 29) David (1973). in his study of Tamils in the Jaffna, modifies Dumont's formula "kinship equals consanguinity plus affinity" (Dumont 1961 81) as "consanguines equals concorporals plus affines" (David 1973 528) He reports that, for the Jaffna Tamils, a woman's substance changes completely on marriage to that of her husband, so that she and her brother, and consequently their children are no longer substantially related at all David points out that the people's own notion of classification of kinsmen basing on the natural

substance and a comparison of these symbols provide scope for the understanding of similarities and differences in the definition of cultural constructs cross-culturally. .

As David tries to find out a paradigmatic scheme for South India which can be extended to North India, Fruzzetti, Oster and Barnett (1982) attempt to see the similarities in the cultural construction of people in Bengal and Tamil Nadu According to them in Tamil systems, other than lineal or vertical relationship, kindred or honzontal relationship is emphasised and forms the defining principle

Focussing on the kinship discourse of various non-Brahmin and Brahmin castes in Tamilnadu, Kapadia (1994), taking a different step in the frame work of women's views on kinship argues that from the female perspective, Tamil kinship is as much a negative as a positive value She complains that Dravidian kinship is portrayed in the dominant male ideology, and points out that these discourses ideologically misrepresent kinship, depicting it as entirely positive Deviating from a core ethno-sociological approach , Busby (1997), influenced by Bourdieu (1977) and Trawick (1990), attempts for an intuitive 'practice-based' "understanding of relationships and kinship categories in the Dravidian kinship system" which is unviersal " and has to do with the understanding of gender" (1997 33) Fo her, terminological categories do not rest on marriage, as Dumont argues, but on pnor considerations of marriageability which ultimately rests on consideration of relatedness

The ethno-sociological approach though extremely important in the understanding of the nature of the kinship system and marriage practices, exhibits a number of problems in the analysis carried out and has been variously criticised (eg Dumont 1983, Good 1991 , McGilvray 1982) The major draw back of this approach, as Busby says, is that "the theories put forward are too precise and localized, and it has proved impossible to generalize from them" (1976 31), and cannot explain a wide spread phenomena such as Dravidian kinship It is not only that these theories are context specific, but fails to understand the distortions, contradictions and variations that invariably occur within the same group

Bilateral tendencies :

A balance between patrilineal and affinal kin in Dravidian kinship has been long back emphasised by Dumont in his argument against the importance of descent line propounded by Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes and other descent theorists However, this centrality of the affinal kin is not carried as far as it is reported by Yalman (1962, 67) who illustrates the importance of bilateral paradigm for the understanding of Dravidian kinship denying the existance of descent group Dumont's (1957) analysis assumes that the Dravidian system have a strong descent system and these strongly distinguished patrilineages are united through 'alliance' But according to Kapadia, the Tamil groups indicated a much more bilateral tendency "with a strong stress on the unity of km (kindred) rather than on their separatness and consequent need for alliance" (1994 283)

It is observed that some of the Dravidian groups are patrilineal with bilateral cross-cousin marriage rule exhibiting tendencies of bilateral society This predominance of matrilateral kin suggest these patrilineal systems as having a 'balanced bilaterality' as termed by Kapadia for the Tamil non-Brahmins (1994 288) What it does mean is that the dogma of patrilineal descent operates as only one principle among several, rather than as the sole principle Thus, as Radcliffe-Brown insists, it is the understanding of the degree of emphasis on the patrilineal principle and how it is used" that matters (1950 14)

Revising Homan's and Schneider's (1955) explanation of unilateral cross-cousin marriage, Allan D Coult (1962) put forward his assumption that the determinant of unilateral as well as bilateral cross-cousin marriage is the jural authority to dispose of a woman in marriage According to him bilateral cross-cousin marriage occurs in societies in which jural authority over female is either vested in the woman herself or is split between her patri and matri kin (bilateral authority) Thus, on the basis of above hypothesis Coult predicts that bilateral cross-cousin marriages are associated with bilateral societies or with weaker unilineal descent groups

However, it is significant to point out here that when bilateral cross-cousin marriages occur in a patrilineal system it cannot be concluded as having a weaker unilineal system, rather it throws light to the need for an understanding of the discrepancy

between the ideology of descent and the actual behaviour, and the bilateral tendencies exhibited by the system

It is precisely in this direction that an approach is attempted emphasising the structural understanding of Muduga kinship system at the same time depicting the actual behaviour from ground and the variations from the ideal occurring within the system Here, social phenomena is not restricted just to the level of ideal norms and rules, but there is need also to look for and understand as Jones says, "how items and events are seen by cultural natives and in peoples rules and recipes for how to act in various situations" (1998 60) In this view, the Muduga kinship can be analysed from an approach explaining the underlying logic of relationship and understanding the native meaning of kinship categories which make sense of the ground reahty, meaningfully uniting the structure and practice of the system A structural understanding of group grounded in the opposition between shanng and exchange forms the basis for the analysis of social phenomena

Taking lead from this approach, the present study attempts to portray the ethnography of the Mudugas of Attappady through the frame work of kinship and marriage which are rooted in the hard facts of descent and alliance The study aims to analyse the behaviour pattern and system of terminology by which they identify members as belonging to particular categones with definite roles and responsibilities which makes for marriage exchange, inheritance of property and the performance of rights and obligations dunng hfe-cycle ntuals Thus the objective is also to understand the nature of interaction and inter-relationship between the kin categones - agnates and the affines which forms the underlying principle of Muduga social structure This theoretical framework takes into consideration the ideology and behaviour of the Mudugas establishing a connecting link between the two realms Since ideology or rule is the representation of practices, the objective is to understand the practices and to know how the people represent their own practices

It is significant to note that among the few studies done on Mudugas (reviewed in chapter 2), there is hardly any reckonable full length intensive study of Muduga social organisation, and more over these works were earned out not with kinship and marriage as the main interest There is absolutely no empirical information on family, kinship and

marriage among the Mudugas. Thus there is an urgent need to understand the various aspects of Muduga kinship system and marriage practices. It is precisely in this direction that the study is aimed to bring out the actual working of the institutions of kinship and marriage of the Mudugas of Attappady in Kerala, in an ethnographic approach

Methodology

This study is based on an independent field investigation employing mainly techniques of participant observation and interviews To know many important aspects of the social organisation of Mudugas, these techniques were found to be more suitable At the same time, some of the basic data like population, number of households, age and marital status, education, etc , of the Mudugas were collected by census schedules Genealogical method was used for collecting data on descent and alliance Out of the 21 Muduga hamlets in the Attappady area, Veettiyoor, Anakkal, Thaze-Kakkupadi, Mele-Kakkupadi, Pottikkal, Thaze-Abbannoor, Mele-Abbannoor, and Ommala were selected and household survey was conducted for 191 households Along with this, data regarding marriage and alliance relationship were also collected from two Kurumba hamlets namely, Thadikundu and Thaze-Thodukki Field work was carried out among the Mudugas of Attappady initially for about four months from March 1995 to June 1995 For a more detailed study, Thaze-Abbannoor hamlet was selected and data has been collected through participant observation, interviews and case studies by staying along with them from March 1996 to December 1996 with a further visit in March 1997

Chapterisation

The ethnographic data on Muduga kinship and marriage and the accompanying analyses have been presented in the following fonnat in eight chapters

The first chapter introduces the theoretical context and frame work in which the work is earned out After giving a review of the literature on kinship studies in general and Dravidian kinship in particular, the significance and objectives of the study will be discussed

Chapter two titled "The Mudugas - Society and culture" gives a bnef account of the socio-cultural background of the Mudugas of Attappady This chapter will also

discuss various other aspects like population, sex-ratio, distribution of Muduga hamlets and oilier factors like ecology, economy and the people of the area.

Chapter three titled "Descent ideology and organization of local descent group" discusses the meaning and ideology of descent as conceived by the people. The chapter also gives a description of the nature of descent group, its constitution and range of corporatness as well as the degree of emphasis of descent principle in various spheres of social hfe and day to day activities

Fourth chapter deals with the family / household and domestic organization of the Mudugas The composition and development cycle of family, division of labour, inheritance of property etc , will be discussed in detail The nature and composition of different levels of corporate domestic units and the sharing of labour and food within this units also forms an important part of this chapter

In the fifth chapter, titled "Kinship terminology and behavioural pattern", the kin terminological paradigm and its empirical operation with reference to individual relationships and km groups will be discussed Analysing the km classification and kinship behaviour, attempts will be made to assess the implications of positive marriage rules for the structure of Muduga kinship terminology

Chapter six is concerned with marriage and alliance relationship and focus attention on the rules and regulations of both the traditional and present system of marriage among the Mudugas This section then goes on to take a detailed look on marriage negotiations, procedure of marriage, ceremonies connected with marriage, transactions of gifts and services accompanying marriages The incident of cross-cousin marriage and the implication of the bilateral cross-cousin marriage with respect to the Muduga kinship system will be discussed

Chapter seven, titled "Rites of passage and prestations", presents a detailed description of various life cycle rituals and the ceremonies and rituals connected with it The right and obligations of agnate and affinal relatives on these occasions as well as the making of gifts and prestations will also be described in this chapter

The final chapter gives a summary of all the preceding chapters and draws conclusion from the analysis of ethnographic findings presented in these chapters